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A Song of Faith

KATHERINE MILNER PEIRCE





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A SONG of FAITH

BY

KATHERINE MILNER PEIRCE

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In Memory of

My Mother

To Whose Inspiration this Book is Due

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PART I

Speak, Lord; for thy Servant Heareth.

Write the vision, and make it plain upon tablets, that he may run that readeth it. For the vision is yet for the appointed time, and it hasteth toward the end, and shall not lie: Though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not delay.

HABAKKUK.

A SONG OF FAITH

Unsculptured stones in simple fashion blent,
Beside Machpelah's cave an altar stood,
And thwart the evening sky's effulgent gold,
Pale filmy mists of perfumed incense rose
From mingled spices in the censer there.

The patriarch of Hebron's plenteous vale,
The friend of God, the righteous Abraham,
With reverent grace the priestly service
wrought,—
Out-spread the spicy symbols of his trust,—
Uplifted hands in attitude of praise,
And plead in prayer Jehovah's sacred voice,
To lead his soul from truth to blessed truth.

A grace supreme had touched the saintly man,
His sinewy frame was wasted by the years,
And silver streaked the heavy ebon tress;
Yet on his brow the mystic touch of faith
Had left the traces of its subtle art
In noble contour and the softened glow
Of brow illumined with the light divine
Of noble purpose, and its hope achieved.

A SONG OF FAITH

Beside him knelt in worship's calm intent,
The child of promise, Sarah's gentle son ;
And from his lips the vesper anthem fell,
In unison with that high mood of love
That moved his father's heart to praise and
prayer.

What miracle of mind was witnessed there,
When silence fell succeeding murmured prayer !
Their souls serene and free from every care,
Awaited some unfolding of the Will,
Whose tender purpose led their sentient minds
Amid the treasured store-house of His love.

The incense burned to ashes soft, and lay
A flutter in the censer's simple cup ;
While twilight drew the purple curtains down
To veil the luster of the glowing west.

Then on the mind of Abraham was poured
A vision wrought of pearly beams of light,
And in its midst, unfolding like a scroll,
By priests within some cloistered chamber kept,—
The promptings of the past. Those holy hours
When trysts with God up-held his drooping soul.

A SONG OF FAITH

He saw the years unfold their passing scenes,
And knew the blessed treasure each had brought
For strong up-building of his inmost soul;
What hours of prayer had given his spirit sight,
To see Jehovah's word triumphant over all —
What hours of service wrought the sacred word
In deathless form of character and deed —
What hours of trust, with patient heart serene,
He 'waited God's fulfillment of design.
So life grew strong by simple formless creed,—
Grew substance of the glory all sublime
His living hope had traced.

From Chaldee's plains to Hebron's fruitful
hills,
The way was long, the years retreating slow;
Yet all the path was smoothed by grace divine,
And every day the careful duty done
Formed in his life a strength of wondrous power,
As some great pillar 'neath the architrave,
Slow growing by the builder's cunning hand
Upholds the dome of lofty symmetry,—
So faith triumphant in its golden deeds
Sustained the arches of his cloistered mind.
He saw the soul that prays for guidance,
In hours of need, finds alway fit reply —

A SONG OF FAITH

For every reverent quest, God's Fatherhood
Stoops down to bless with utmost gift of love.

Long, long he conned the subtle truth revealed !
The human spirit growing strong in power
By constant musing on the source divine
Of all that is, or ever is to be.
Here in the hour of worship, well he knew
This inner secret of his life's success —
This deathless token of his trust —
Was vitalized and blest.

Then as he read this grace of inner life,
He, too, remembered God had promise given
Of its eternal permanence in souls unborn,—
That men should trace their lineage from him
And keep the treasure pure. 'Twas then
He knew the living conquest of his hope
Was Isaac's gentle soul.

And seeing this
He prayed for clearer sight to pierce
The mystic veil and wrest from life
The secret of its sweetest mystery ;
His Isaac's love, and that pure maiden heart
Awaiting somewhere in the realm of time

A SONG OF FAITH

To keep this sacred trust, this living faith
Unsullied from the taint of unbelief.

There as they knelt in attitude of prayer,
On Abraham the heavenly spirit pressed,
Until he saw with soul's prophetic sight,
The answer to his anxious heart's request.
And lo! Jehovah's voice like evening's breeze
That croons the flowers upon the hills to sleep,
In accents soft;

“My child of faith,
I give thee this to know, in token
Of the promise once we sealed
With sacrifice and fire.
In token of the hour when all the stars
Bore witness to the unborn multitudes
Who yet shall keep thy faith in Me secure.
For this I fold the veil of being back
And show My sacred purpose quite complete.”

The tossing waves of vision rose and fell,
As vanished years flowed into future years,
And dimly passed the mighty sires and sons
Of Israel's dawn. Heroic souls,
Who guarding still the spirit's sacred trust,
Amid opposing nations,—saw the dream

A SONG OF FAITH

Of grander statehood in the hearts of men
Who knew Jehovah's Word and keep the Faith.

But oft, alas, the paling mists of doubt,
A veil of darkness o'er the nation threw;
Yet midst the gloom, prophetic heroes rose
With moral courage to proclaim the truth,—
To hurl the idols from the house of Baal,
And baser idols from the hearts of men.

Then to his gaze was lent a holier sight,
A trail of glory spread across the gloom,—
Angelic hosts on silent pinions bright
Bore thence a symbol of celestial bloom.
A mystic flower with trailing tendrils dight,
Whose snowy crown was bathed in purple light.

Upon the hand of Abraham it lay,
With clinging tendrils round his fingers twined,
Its silver petals vibrant with the ray
Of golden light its mystic heart enshrined,
And while he gazed its subtle beauty spread
And radiant glory round about him shed.

Then Abraham the symbol beauteous knew
To be a portent of the sacred Life

A SONG OF FAITH

Sometime to rise among the busy throng
And spend its glory for the souls of men,—
To bless with peace the trouble-wearied minds,—
To breathe the incense of a heavenly grace,—
To lift the lives of men to higher plains
Of faith made perfect in Jehovah's love.

And then alas! a barren hill disclosed
Its rugged slopes amid the shifting scenes,
Whereon a mocking host in tumult surged
Around a cross whose tortuous beams sustained
The bleeding body of the gentle One
Whose days of love made fair the flower of life.

O heavenly Love so vanquished, so reviled!
What boon can recompense for sacrifice
So terrible and complete?
Is this the end of faith's prophetic dream?
The end of trusting hope?

The gloom of night drew down, the deeper dark,
When heavy clouds obscure the constant stars,
And all was still. E'en Abraham forebore
The plaint of anguish that oppressed his soul.

'Twas grace divine that blest the offering

A SONG OF FAITH

Upon the hill slope by Machpelah's cave,
And while the vision faded with the glow
Of crimson paling in the glowing west,
And Hebron's forest turned to somber gray,—
Still Abraham beside the altar bowed
O'ercome with pain and awe.
And while he mused in silence all inert,
Unto his soul a Voice impelling spake,
And this the portent of its blessed word ;

“Nay, do not grieve, my child,
My will is boundless in its power to bless
The deep revealing of My law of life ;
The triumph of thy strong, abiding faith.
My love incarnate in the stainless Son,
Oh faithful one, are tokens of thy quest ;
Bear in thy mind with reverent love and
praise,—
My grace hath placed its seal upon thy prayer,
My benediction on thy heart's desire,
In perfect peace go hence and do thy will.”

The patriarch rose and from the altar turned,
A smile upon his lips, his failing eyes
Bright with the joy that filled his trusting heart ;
So moved by grace, his aged and trembling hand

A SONG OF FAITH

With light caress on Isaac's shoulder laid,
The while he said;

“My son, our gift was good, and love divine
Hath granted more than I in meekness sought.
Jehovah's name be praised! Henceforth where
 faith abides,
May scenes like this His perfect Will reveal.
Content thee now and let us seek our tent,
So dimly seen by Mamre's silver pool.
Behold the paschal moon from Jordan's hills
Rises in splendor on the misty night,
And pours her opalescent glow
Upon the landscape, sweet with virgin spring.
See how those beams enfold Machpelah's cave,
As though the loved one in the realm of song
Had wrought yon halo in the land of death
To bless us with her peace and sweet content.
My well-beloved, my son of Sarah born,
Thy will to serve, thy youthful strength I crave,
To guide my frail and age betraying steps
Adown the rugged steeps of Hebron's hill.”

“Yea, Father, as thou wilt,” the son replied.
So Isaac led with step serene and slow,
Along the forest path. Softly they moved,
Their hearts in unison with evening's peace,

A SONG OF FAITH

The stars of faith and love serenely glowed
Within their soul's exalted firmament,
Whose zenith touched Jehovah's courts of peace.
Together blent in grace of rhythmic tread,
Step timed to step and forms in concord
swayed,—
The pilgrims softly sought the dewy glade
And sheltering tent by Mamre's silver pool.

Here paused they, lifting solemn gaze
To mark the moonbeams guild the verdant hill,
And Sarah's tomb upon the distant heights.
Then Abraham in quiet accents spake;

“My son, thou knowest sorrow's secret pain
That stills the lifeblood when the sacred bond
Of fond affection severs 'neath the touch
Of death's compelling hand. Thou knowest, too,
How long the dreary void
Of loving glance and tender presence calls
To those mute chords within thy breast,—
How long thine ear inclines to hear the voice
Whose tender accents, like the breath of morn,
Awoke thy soul to bloom with filial love.
Ah! thou wast doubly blest, thy mother's grace
Waxed stronger in the years that swiftly sped

A SONG OF FAITH

Ere came the boon of little baby hands
To grasp the favor of her bounteous care;
So rich her love, it circled thy young life
With every boon thy gentle nature craved."

"Her failing hands wove fabrics soft and fine
To drape thy comely form. But most
She cared to trace the fancies of thy mind
And lead thy thoughts along the way of truth,—
Taught thee the strength concealed in living
faith,
Moulded the purpose of thy youthful life,
In noble action everywhere inspired
By thought intent to keep Jehovah's sacred law."

"Her deepest joy she sang in thankful praise,
For nobler promise of the years to come,
When thou shouldst foster God's eternal word,
And in such service bless all living men.
For this her heart with gladness over-flowed,
And in her heart the light prophetic grew
Of that far time when all the world should know
The peace and sweetness of thy quiet soul. . . ."

"It is enough,
The time has fully come,
When I would know God's will concerning thee,

A SONG OF FAITH

And so today we sought Machpelah's cave,
And by my Sarah's tomb the altar reared,
To offer incense to our guiding Lord."

"His word is good,
And all the future lay
Revealed in glory to my anxious eyes ,
The while His voice commanded me arise
And make provision for thy trusting heart.
Come, let us seek the shelter of the tent
And Eliezer call to meet us there."

Then Isaac drew the drooping tent-folds back
And let the silver glory shed its radiance
On the simple couch of ease
Within the patriarch's home. The still retreat,
Where wealth of heart prevailed,
Triumphant over dross of store and gold.
He drew the divan with its spread of fleece,
Within the circle of the mellow light,
And for refreshment brought the jar of milk
And wheaten loaf from out the hidden store.
With gentle word he took the father's staff,
Unloosed the sandals and refreshed the feet
With cooling water from the shimmering pool.
And while he smoothed the ebon locks and beard,

A SONG OF FAITH

And spread the mantle o'er the weary form,
Good Eliezer came and joined the twain.

The salutation given, in silent prayer
The patriarch bowed and Isaac murmured low
The thanks for bread.

Then Abraham spake softly;

“This is well,
Thy service, Eliezer, I would ask,
To fill my cup of blessing to the brim,
Ere God shall call me hence to join
My loved ones in the land of light.”

“Thou knowest how my hope of future years
Entwines the life of this, my gentle son,
And how the promise of the Holy One
Must be fulfilled through his conforming deed.
Then this I pray, before the blighting hour
When death shall bring me home.
Thou shalt bring thither from Chaldea’s clime,
From kindred of my reverend father’s house,
A virgin daughter, whose endearing heart
And grace of comradeship shall always bring,
In times of sorrow and of joy alike
The blessed comfort of abiding peace.”

A SONG OF FAITH

“Mine eyes behold the maids of Canaan’s pride,
But vain their beauty, vain their heart’s delight,—
Their idols all are wrought of worldly dross,
The pride of conquest and the brave display
Of gilded trappings. No desire have they,
To turn the quiet thought to worth of soul
And hope of future life.
Nay, thou shalt seek Chaldea’s verdant plains,
And yon small remnant of my father’s house,
Who cherish still the Spirit’s boundless power,
And hope for witness of its hidden truth
In living deeds of men.
There thou wilt find the maiden I would choose,
God-fearing, faithful, wise and ever true;
Well worthy of the high behest,—to be
The mother of a matchless race of men,
And meet to dwell within my Sarah’s tent,
The wife of our beloved.”

“Yea, I will go,” the steward made reply,
Content to know thy God will guard the way;
But if the maiden ask for some delay,
And begs for Isaac’s voice to plead his cause,
What then shall be thy will? Shall I return
And hither bring thy son?

A SONG OF FAITH

“Nay, nay,” said Abraham in quick distress,
“My son must bide by Mamre’s silver pool
And yield me still his care.”

Then musing

While the silence fell between and soft
The splash of water smote the ear,
And soothing night-winds kissed the furrowed
brow,
Again his voice took up the broken thread
Of discourse, and wistful, soft and low,
As one who dreams repeats the thoughts
That sweeps the chambers of his mind.

“The maid will come. The word of God is good,
My son, art thou content?”

“Yea Father, God is good, His covenant
Is sacred unto me, and this thy vision
Glorified and blest by sacrifice and prayer
Is sacrament and law. It grows within my will
As ’tis in thine,—The purpose God has planned
To keep His Word an ever living flame
In minds and hearts of men.
I cannot see so far adown the years as thou,
Oh father mine, but quite content am I

A SONG OF FAITH

To walk by wisdom of thy mind inspired,
Content to know the maiden in Chaldea's land
Will keep the law and by her lore of love
Cherish and sustain our living faith."

"True is thy thought, my son," the patriarch said,

"It comforts me with gentleness and worth;
God's blessing on thy life. And thou
My friend, thou steward of my house,
Take thou the best of all our goodly store,
The gems of Egypt and the weaves of Tyre,
With camels to the desert ways enured,
And hasten thou to far Chaldea's land,—
To Ur, the city of the sacred flame,
There ask for Nahor, kindred of my sire.
Oh haste thee and before the morning sun
Again illumines Hebron's purple hills
Be thou prepared to take the beaten way
Toward the hills of dawn."

"So let us pray;

"Jehovah! Lord! Thy word is guide and stay,
To souls afaint upon life's weary road,
We thank Thee for thy presence every day
And for the favors Thou hast oft bestowed.

A SONG OF FAITH

Grant Thy compassion and thy goodness prove,
Let us but yield a pure and faithful heart;
Grant us to know that wisdom, faith and love
Of Thy great kingdom are the better part.

So let us serve Thine own supreme behest,
So blend our wills in Thy supreme delight,
That blessings may attend our simple quest
And love divine in mortal lives unite.”

PART II

Before the Walls of Ur.

Rebekah came forth with her pitcher on her shoulder.

GENESIS.

A SONG OF FAITH

Chaldea's plains, enwrapped by summer noon,
Gleamed far and near with harvest green and
gold,
The wide Euphrates rolling slow between,
Shone silver in the sun's effulgent beam.
A fleecy splendor wrought of cirrus clouds
Rolled golden in the dome of azure blue,—
And touched with topaz all the ripening fields,
Or paled to amethystine mists of light
Upon the distant hills of Elam's range.

A gem of pearl, the stately walls of Ur
Adorned the plain. Her temples, homes,
And busy marts of trade, arose
In wondrous grandeur and the strength
Of simple grace and peerless symmetry,—
The architectural dream of kings,
Who sought in nature's lavish grace,
The plan and grand proportion for their art,
And wrought it here upon Chaldea's plains
In wood and brick and stone.

A land of peerless beauty on that day,
When Eliezer paused beside the spring,

A SONG OF FAITH

Palm shaded midst the plain.
How long his caravan with even pace
Had trod the desert waste,
Barren of food and water's sparkling gleam !
More pitiless the sun at noonday seemed,
Since effort and the weary lapse of time
Had wasted eager strength.
And now when keen desire to conquer
Time and space and hindering circumstance,
Was dulled by purpose most complete,—
The weary pilgrims gathered 'neath the palm
And sought refreshment from the crystal pool,
And sweet repose in midday's languid sleep.
The camels knelt around the bubbling spring,
The tired attendants rested by their side,
Nor lifted voice in song or idle jest,—
So deep the noontide peace.

Beneath a palm apart,
Stood Eliezer in a pensive mood,
Lost in the calm of sweet pastoral scenes,
And the fair city on the verdant plain.

And while he mused,
He seemed to live again that distant day,
When God's commanding voice
Called Abraham to leave familiar fields,

A SONG OF FAITH

And go a pilgrim to the storied land
That clasps the billows of the western sea.
Then memory lived again the woeful day,
When all the hosts of fierce Nakhunta came
From Elam's mountains on the purple east,
To waste in wrath the Chaldee's household
 gods,—

To lead, in chains, the priestly brotherhood,—
From sacred fanes and sacred duties dear,
To serve the altars of his hated shrines.
The nobler faith in beneficent power,
So richly poured from heavenly orbs of light,
To bless the people and direct their gods,—
This, too, Nakhunta crushed with ruthless hand,
Till torn and bleeding lay the nation's heart.

Ah day of woe! Yet blest to Abraham,
When from the broken clay and prostrate faith,
He turned to seek, beyond the constant stars,—
Beyond the moon and life invoking sun,
The God supreme, the Holy One, whose power
Hath formed the planets in the pathless blue,
And fixed the laws of nature's fair domain.
Thrice happy day! when he obeyed the Voice,
And from the broken nation turned his feet
To follow its behest. Prosperity and peace
His steps had blessed. His life,

A SONG OF FAITH

Conforming to Jehovah's laws,
Was rich in proven truth of virtue won,
But if unwitting he had read awrong
Jehovah's will, and so in trespass wrought,
The bitter fruit of heart oppressing pain
But proved the love of His restraining hand
And led to dearer truth.

So Eliezer read the law of faith ;
Before the vision bowed his head
With humble heart. With meekly folded palms,
Murmured low in broken tones of prayer :

“Oh, thou Almighty God ! Jehovah, Lord,
Friend of my master, faithful Abraham,
I thank Thee for this vision of thy will
I thank Thee, for Thy care along the way,
And for Thy peace that keeps our hour of rest.
In Thy good pleasure bless my duty here,
And may Thy name be praised forevermore.”

Bleating of lambs and low of many kine,
The cry of herdsmen mid the shifting throng,
Confusion wrought beside the western gate
Of Ur's gray circling wall.

A crystal pool was there.

A SONG OF FAITH

Hence shepherds late had driven their thirsty
flocks,

And drew the limpid water from the well
To sate their thirst.

A cry of warning 'rose amid the strife,—
The call of one who, looking toward the west,
With shaded eyes against the setting sun,
Beheld the approaching forms
Of ten great camels laden with the spoil
Of precious merchandise. The drivers
Leading straight unto the gate.

“‘Make way, make way, behold the caravan!
Some merchant princee from Egypt’s verdant
Nile
Comes seeking traffic in the marts of Ur.’”

The scurrying flocks and herds turned right
and left.

Some wandering back into the quiet fields,
Still others waiting for the final draught
Stood meekly by. So the proud camels came
And paused beside the well.

The herdsmen gathered round with curious
gaze
To greet the stately pilgrim of the west;

A SONG OF FAITH

To beg the legends of the storied land,
And learn what treasure he was bringing hence
To barter in the market stalls of Ur.
But eager questions pressing to the lips
With reverence stayed, when quick the kindling
glance

Met the calm light in Eliezer's eyes.
No lordly merchant this with precious store
Of spices, jewels or the fruit of looms
To spend for shining gold. Yet his the glance
To read the souls of men. With poise serene
To bid each traveler stand, and by the sign
Of manhood's honor and supreme resolve,
Declare his worth before he speaks the word
That tells his mission or reveals his need.

Thus while the shepherds met the steward's
test,
And ere the word of salutation fell,
A chime of silvery laughter filled the air,
And from the gate a troupe of maidens came,
Bearing the water jars of glazed clay,
To fill with crystal treasure from the well.
The mellow music of their laughter chimed
To merry smile and merrier fleeting glance;
And pattering feet the dusty pavement prest
So lightly with the subtle eloquence

A SONG OF FAITH

Of pure and blithesome happiness,
That every fleeting posture spoke the grace
Of glad hearts blest with youth and innocence,
And touched with conscious pride of high re-
solve.

So fair the cluster of Chaldean girls,
It seemed the sculptor's vision of delight,
His bright and mystic dreams
Of nature's fine perfection, were here at Ur,
In pride of maidenhood,
Made flesh to grace her streets.

Yet one fair maiden, lovelier than the rest,
Lent brightness to that happy sisterhood.
Unconscious of her power to please and bless,
She drew, by grace of tender gentleness,
The fond affection of her little world.
By arts of kindness, she most deftly wrought
The silken chords of perfect courtesy,
And held them comrades in the hours alike
Of fleeting sorrow and abiding joy.
So subtle was the charm her presence gave,
'Twas hers to guide, not lead, the sportive
mood,—
To temper gladness with the deeper joy
Of loving favor and the gracious thought,—

A SONG OF FAITH

To bless a sister ere she sought to know
The pleasure she might grasp with eager hand.

She was no fairer than her comrades fair,
Her robe no richer in its art and weave,
Nor were her jewels wrought of costlier gems,—
Yet some fair grace of beauty and of pride,—
Some trace of thought that ruled her gentle will,
Like twilight on the dewy hills of dawn,
Illum’ed her face, informed her changing mood,
And marked her fairer than the fairest there.

’Twas thus Rebekah came among the throng,
She leaned her jar upon the dripping curb,
Gazing the while on Eliezer’s face,—
The smile upon her lips, but in her eyes
The look of one who sees in morning light,
The semblance of some half-forgotten dream,
And bids shy memory in haste to weave
The broken strands that bound the vision bright,
And show its incidents in one harmonious whole.

When Eliezer saw the fair young face,
Beheld the mist of floating raven hair,
The tinted ivory of the broad, high brow,
Traced with the blue of netted veins,—
Saw, too, the flush of maiden modesty

A SONG OF FAITH

O'erspreading all,—he marked with joy
The clear and earnest gaze of calm gray eyes,—
"Twas then his soul was raised in silent prayer:

"Jehovah, if it be Thy will, this be the maid
I came to win for gentle Isaac's love,
Grant now Thy favor in my earnest quest."

Then to the maid entreatingly:

"My child, I pray thee, one refreshing drink,
From thy cool pitcher, I bespeak;
To wash the desert dust from lips and throat."

"Yea, drink, my lord," she spake most graciously,
And from the fountain drew the dripping jar,
Poised it upon her hand with youthful grace,
While Eliezer drank the cooling wave.

His thirst allayed,

The steward spake his thanks
For gift so graciously bestowed.
The maiden smiled and quickly made reply:
"Let me, I pray thee, for thy camels draw,
'Tis happy boon indeed."

And then with haste
She filled again and once again the troughs,
Until the camels rested satisfied.

A SONG OF FAITH

Right glad of heart to note her worthiness,
And thankful for this token of his quest,
The steward smiling asked :

“Fair child, I pray whose daughter mayst
thou be ?

And hast thy father’s house the room to lodge
My comrades and myself ? Hast straw and grain
To feed my camels that have fasted long ?”

“Good sir,” the maiden said in mild reply,
“I am Rebekah, child of Bethuel,
The son of Milcah, wife of Nahor’s heart.
My father’s house hath goodly store of peace
And plenteous provender for thee and thine.
I’ll hasten hence to tell my noble sire.”

Then Eliezer, drawing from his treasure store
Bracelets and earrings wrought of burnished
gold,
And rich gems with the cunning artifice
Of Egypt’s studied craft, in kindness said :
“Take these, good maid, these golden orna-
ments,
And give thy father salutation, peace,
In name of my good master, Abraham,
Who is thy father’s kinsman. Hither sent
Am I upon a mission to thy sire.”

A SONG OF FAITH

Refreshed and glad of heart for quest so blest,
The steward led his caravan within the city
 walls,
But ere he left the gateway far behind,
Young Laban came, the son of Bethuel,
And for his sister's sake a welcome gave,
And proffered guidance to his father's house.
Then Eliezer bowed acknowledgment
For kindly gift of friendly word and deed,
And begged his host point out the homeward
 way.

So Laban led along the narrow streets,
Past humble homes and palaces of pride
Wrought in Chaldea's clay. The plastic walls
O'erspread with myriad hues the painter's arts
 devise.
Slowly they passed the palace of the kings,
And marked the splendor of its stately form,—
The rich adornment of the sculptor's craft.
Noted the high façade with curious carvings
 traced,
And porticos ornate with strange device
Of winged bulls and gods, half man, half beast.
There, too, the white of alabaster gleamed
Fretted with many a curious cuneiform
To laud the deeds of Shumir's mighty kings.

A SONG OF FAITH

More slowly paced they past the spacious court
Of Ur's fair temple sacred to the moon,
And marveled at the architectural pride
Of massive masonry in terrace piled,
And crowned with clustered colonnades.
So high it rose above the palaces,—
So stately towered in glow of evening sky,—
It seemed the serving priests might cross the vaulted blue,
And from the silver crescent bring the light
To bless the hearts of simple votaries.

But past these triumphs of the builder's art,
Good Eliezer moved with heart serene and still.
No pomp of beauty 'woke to conscious pride
The sense of reverence for the outward form;
Nor did the fane adorned with simple grace,
Invoke his soul to worship and adore
The orb of light.
So when the gold and crimson after-glow
Gave place to twilight's silvery mist,
He stood serene beside the portico
That marked the entrance to the spacious hall
Where Bethuel abode with all his house.

And lo! the master came,

A SONG OF FAITH

Saying with oriental charm of speech :

“Thou blessed of the Lord, come in and rest ;
Within the hall the bounteous feast is spread,
Come in, I pray thee, and my joy fulfill.”

Then Eliezer bowing low replied :

“Jehovah’s peace be unto thee and thine !
’Tis in His name I take thy proffered gift,
And tarry with thee in my hour of need.”

Then through the portals to the inner court
Young Laban led the camels, and his men
Made haste the heavy burdens to remove,
And place for their refreshment, grain and
grass

Fresh gathered from Chaldea’s sunny plains.
Still others drew from out the cistern’s depth
Cool water for the weary traveler’s feet,—
Removed the dust of travel and the pain
Of burning sun and blasting desert winds ;—
Their forms anointed with the healing balm
And soothing lotions mixed by Micah’s hands.

The guests, fresh robed in linen, soft and cool,
Were led into the cheerful banquet room,
Where viands dressed with rare and cunning art
O’erspread the tables with a lavishness

A SONG OF FAITH

That told the tender care and generous heart
Of one who loved her household and gave heed
To every want of restful comfort there.

When Eliezer saw the bounteous feast,
Its subtle art of hospitality,
And met the kindling glance of host and friend,
His heart was touched with sense of brother-
hood,
And putting by the brimming cup of peace,
Stood forth and said :
“These tokens of thy love bid me to stay
My want of nourishment ’till I
Unfold the secret of my quest.”

All eyes were turned toward the gentle face
With wondering glance, but Bethuel said :
“Speak on.”

The steward bowed :

“Jehovah’s name be praised,
His faithful friend, thy kinsman, Abraham,
Calls me his servant. There
In Hebron’s vale, whence turned his pilgrimage,
Jehovah’s law he keeps, His altars serve.
And there Jehovah guards his passing days
With His exalted love and blesses him

A SONG OF FAITH

With wealth of many flocks and herds.
Unnumbered are the lambs his shepherds tend,—
Unnumbered, too, the herds at Hebron's pool,
While many asses crop the springing grass
On Eschol's verdant plain.
These camels ten, within thy inner court,
Are but the choicest of a splendid herd
That carry merchandise to Egypt's marts
From rich bazaars 'neath old Damascus' walls.
In coins of Egypt and of Canaan's pride,
His gold and silver is a plenteous store,
And serving men of brave and stalwart form,
And maidens, capable in household arts,
Enlarge the wealth of righteous Abraham.''

"But more than these, his soul and form of man
He guards with reverent care,
Well knowing, life is gift of God Most High,
And to be treasured more than wealth of earth.
'Tis thus he moves to deeds by faith sublime,
And life is builded on Jehovah's Word
In acts of virtue and unselfishness.
Thus doth he lay foundations strong and deep
To build a nation in the hearts of men
Who love mankind for sonship to his God.

A SONG OF FAITH

“Jehovah’s voice has sealed the solemn pledge
Of future glory for the patriarch’s seed,
And in the tent by Hebron’s crystal pool
Abides the seal of that blest covenant,—
The gentle Isaac, son and heir
Of Abraham’s estate. Not of his wealth alone,
But of the noble treasure of his soul
And deathless love of Sarah’s mother-heart.

“At manhood’s prime his years are now ar-
rived,
And for his grace, his saintly sire would seek
A fitting comrade for the future years,—
A wife who holds her gift of womanhood
A sacred trust from great Jehovah’s hand
To mould the embryo of a race
In plastic hearts of youth.
For this I came to fair Chaldea’s plains,
Sent hither by my master Abraham,
To seek in Nahor’s house the favored bride.

“I, doubting much the favor of my quest,
Came but this evening to your city gate,
And lifting humble heart in prayer,
Besought the Lord to grant the meek request
And show the purpose of His great design.

A SONG OF FAITH

Scarce had my mind the mild petition asked,
When from the gate thy child, Rebekah, came,
Heard my request for water and in kindness
pledged

The food and shelter of her father's house.
And when she claimed the lineage
Of Nahor, brother of my righteous lord,
I bowed my head and knew Jehovah spake.

“So if my errand seemeth good to thee,
I pray thee grant thy favor ere I break
The bread or drain the cup of cheer;
If not, then let me turn and seek
My master in his distant tent.”

Then Bethuel and Laban made reply:
“Tis not for us to know, when great Jehovah
speaks,
So let His will be done.
Take thou Rebekah to thy master's son,
And to thy soul be peace.”

Then Eliezer bowed his saintly head,
And prayed Jehovah's blessing on the feast.

PART III

The Legend of the Beautiful

Hea, the supreme god, the king of the universe, who alone can violate the laws which he has imposed upon creation, determined to recall her (Isther) and to grant her boon, for which she had descended into the realms of Allat,—the water of life, that would restore Tammuz to life.

CHALDEAN LEGEND.

A SONG OF FAITH

The morning glow threw transient mists of
rose

Across the ethereal whiteness of the sky,
And grew to gold upon the crested hills
Of Elam's guardian range.

Anon the pulsing waves of light,
Rolled surge on surge through all the star pierced
dome ;—

Brightened and swept the portals of the west
With trailing mists of blue,
Then glowed transparent in the heavenly height,
Far, far beyond the paling planet's blaze,—
Until the sense of space illimitable
Invoked the soul to reverence.

Upon the housetop Eliezer knelt in prayer,
Unheeding that great miracle of dawn,
Unheeding too, the sounds of waking life
That rose and fell, pulsating like the light ;
The low of kine, the bleat of hungry sheep,
The roar of traffic and the clearer tones
Of human voices speaking in the street ;

A SONG OF FAITH

Unheeding too, the wierd and solemn chant
Of myriad voices raised in unison
To strange discordant music of the harp,
The taboret, the cymbal and the drum,—
Weird melody of temple service wrought
To call the devotees of Hea and the Moon
To morning sacrifice.

Unheeding all, good Eliezer knelt,
With folded palms and lifted eager mind
Toward the source of thought and light and life—
The Spirit,— Soul of all the universe.

Intent to learn

Jehovah's will, His ever blest command,
He touched the mystic source of thought,
And felt his human will transformed
With purpose not his own.
A miracle it grew within his soul,
As though the pulseless clay,
Pierced with a ray of spirit animate,
Arose to conquer time and fate.
By this he knew the sign of heavenly Will,
The mild behest he hungered to obey,
And glad of heart, he sought his kindly host
And prayed him speed his journey to the west.

A SONG OF FAITH

Quickly he sought the inner court
Where Bethuel with all his household stood
To greet the guest returned from morning
prayer.

The salutation and the blessing said,
The steward spake this word of anxious care:
“The Lord is good. He blest my mission here
With precious gift beyond my highest hope.
This morn I read His message true and clear,
And fain would now obey His mild behest,—
So give, I pray, this maiden of my quest,
And speed my journey to my master’s house.”

“Not so,” said Laban, son of Bethuel,
“O hasten not nor murmur to be gone!
Our guest thou art, and welcome to our house,—
Then stay and rest until thou be refreshed
Of thy long journey from the storied land.”

And Mariam pled, her mother-love intent
To keep its idol yet a little while;
“Oh hasten not, or if it be thy will
Then let the maiden tarry, I beseech.
She is o’er young to leave her mother’s care,—
A year she needs to grow in woman’s grace
And learn the arts of sweet domestic peace,—

A SONG OF FAITH

To fashion with her own industrious hand
The bridal garments and to weave, perchance,
The store of cloth to meet the family need,"

"Entreat me not," then Eliezer said,
"The Lord commands and fain would I obey;
And lo! my master, Abraham, awaits,
With patient faith, but eager, longing eyes,
The happy eve that marks our safe return.
And Isaac, also wearies for the voice
And gentle presence of this gentle maid.
So pray you, grant my anxious heart's request
And let us go in peace."

Then questioned they Rebekah; "Wilt thou go,
Upon this journey to the distant land?
Wilt thou acknowledge this Jehovah, God,
Whom Abraham doth worship and believe?"

"Yea, I will go," Rebekah, smiling said,
"His purpose I perceive, for like
The drapery erstwhile hung between
The carved casements of my window's frame,—
And now removed that I may plainly see
The landscape with a clear unhindered view,—
So Eliezer's story clears the doubt

A SONG OF FAITH

From heart and mind and inmost sense of soul,
'Till I behold the future fraught with peace
And hear Jehovah's voice in this that calls.''

The lengthening shadows marked the day's
decline,
When westward from the massive gates of Ur,
A half day's journey, paused the caravan
Amid a grove where gleamed a crystal pool.

And fair the scene,
As 'mid the palms and clustered groves of fig,
The camels moved, each bravely decked
With trappings wrought of Egypt's cunning
looms;
And saddles rich with curious designs
In burnished gold and silver filigree
Of rare Damascus art.

The camel drivers led the caravan
With song and merry jest.
Their bright fantastic garb of many hues
Ornate with threads of quaint embroidery,
And bright with jewels of a rude design.
Talisman and charm of curious power
Clamored soft music to destroy the spell
Of spirits evil.

A SONG OF FAITH

But all this bright array ne'er lured the sense
From greater charms of fairer beauty there;
Rebekah's maidens, brightest girls of Ur,
In festive dress of oriental dyes
And lavish gleam of gems,—
Around their mistress wove the blithesome spell
Of youth and beauty in glad innocence.
But Bethuel's daughter rode amid her maids,
The peerless flower of Chaldee's womanhood,—
Whose beauty unadorned was fairer still.

In merry mood they paused beside the spring,
The camels slowly kneeling at command,
The riders hastening to dismount
And seek refreshment from the placid pool.
Good Eliezer paced the grassy path,
His lips attuned with reverent thankfulness
For flowing water's sweet refreshing boon.
Rebekah came and calmly stood beside,
The while her maidens laughing gathered round
And offered water in the drinking cups
Or fruits of Chaldee tendered with the hand.
Still others quickly spread the bounteous feast,
And bade their mistress and her guardian
Hasten to partake the cup of cheer.
But e'er she brake the small unleaven loaf,

A SONG OF FAITH

Rebekah turned with wistful, tender gaze,
Toward the purple shadows of the east,
Where like a gem of orient splendor bright,
The towers of Ur caught up day's fading beam
And waved it back with many a shimmer of
 delight
Across the verdant plain.

Observing this, Rebekah, smiling said ;
“Behold my native city wafts to me,
Across the leagues of Chaldea’s fruitful fields,
A bright farewell and pledge of destiny.
It is the secret of her mystic name,
So long revered by those who love her well. . .
A talisman of yon bright Sacred Flame
That guards the happy children of the plain.”

“Auspicious too, the face of yonder moon
Pale glowing on the far horizon’s bar,
Full orbed and beauteous. The silver stars
Are ranged in order fair to guard my steps.
See ! there the lamp of Isthbar lights the west
To bless my eyes with light of love supreme ;
Ah, happily now I leave her votive shrine,
And seek henceforth the perfect law of truth
Beyond the portals of the setting sun.”

A SONG OF FAITH

“Good Eliezer, pray, look not so grave,
The truth, I know, is veiled in mystic deeps,
But 'tis the fancy of the youthful mind
That reads the portents in these heavenly signs,
Albeit wise men of Chaldea's schools
Have thought it well to read their purpose so.
Nay, well I know that He who guides those worlds
Upon their shining pathway day by day,
Doth guard us with His boundless love more vast
Than human hearts can know or understand.
So while I stand in mute and humble awe,
Before the works of His creative hand,
My happy mind goes forth in sportive mood
To wander 'mid the marvels of the sky,
Interpreting in language all its own
The deathless song of His infinitudes.”

“Thou knowest, Eliezer, all that pleasant lore,
The Chaldea mystics write of Ister's love,—
The love of woman passing sweet and fair
That holds the threads of life,
And stills the passions of our vaunting pride?
Thou knowest not? Then harken well my friend
While we partake this festal cup of cheer,
And evening draws her purple curtains down.”

A SONG OF FAITH

“In Hea’s bright abode, beyond the sun,
The powerful gods assemble to adore
The great creative One.
Yea, in his court, attendant on his word,
Those shining ones extol his power in song,
Or hasten to the utmost realms of light
To do his will among the hosts of life.
Among that throng who serve his high behest,
Two gracious ones attend his every wish,
Tammuz, the beautiful, the Isthар, queen of
love.”

“O Eliezer! could thine eyes have seen
The strength and splendor of that mighty one,
Thy heart had been rejoiced.
So great he was in you high pantheon
Where dwell great Hea’s sons,
They named him Beautiful, nor yet
Had words the power to trace the charm
Of Tammuz’ lordly worth.
While Isthар bound in meshes of her love
All hearts of flesh, Tammuz, with joy
Beamed light and warmth abroad,
And with the subtle magic of his touch
Awoke to life the sleeping forms of earth.”

A SONG OF FAITH

“But Tammuz knew his gift of wondrous power

Was worthless without Istharp’s boon of love —
Was lifeless to, without the instinct sweet
Of mutual dependence and the trust
Of perfect understanding and its grace.
And so he turned to Istharp and besought
That she reveal the secret of her charm
And grant to him the magic of her gift.
But Istharp must deny the strange request,
For this, her power, was gift of Hea’s will
And not her own to give.”

“Then Tammuz’ wonder grew, and as he sought

Her gentle ministrations to unite
The severed units of his mighty sphere,
He learned of Istharp’s grace and queenliness
And valued more the goddess than her gift.
Yea, in her heart of being was a charm
That made her more than love.
Istharp is woman, though a goddess born,
And every grace of loveliness and charm
That makes our mortal womanhood adored,
Is in her life exhalted and enhanced,
For wisdom sways her noble mind

A SONG OF FAITH

And gladness rules the promptings of her heart.
Her sweet enchantment rests on Hea's world,
With wonderous witchery of glad delight;
Much as the perfume of the golden rose
Pervades the smiling garden's dewey air—
So has she spread a gossamer of love
About the anguish of our mortal life—
Has placed her silver lamp in evening's blue
To pierce the shadows of the falling night
And bid remembrance of her gracious self."

"Ah Eliezer! could I tell it thee,
So thou shouldst see with vision pure and clear,
That matchless grace of perfect womanhood!
'Twas not in charms that fetter and allure
To cheat the senses with their gaudy arts,—
Nor yet the pretense of the cultured mind
That only dazzles with its wealth of words.
Nay, rather strong in consciousness of power
To weave the arts of peace. She moved
To myriad deeds of glad unselfishness,
And so revealed the glory of all life.
So great her art, so good her purpose too,
The lordly Tammuz felt his heart enthralled
For honor of her peerless womanhood,

A SONG OF FAITH

And spake the words his love enraptured heart
Poured o'er the portals of his parted lips.”

“Isthar listened and was still.
As grows the light upon the misty vales,
When morning sunbeams pierce the purple dawn,
So on her being dawned the secret truth
Of life’s eternal source.
In fleeting visions of the happy hour,
She knew that Tammuz was the Lord of Life,
And from his hand the gift of being fell,—
The gift of being, purposeless and cold
Without the fair enchantment of her love.
So duty urged to hear the tender plea,
And service prompted joy of sacrifice.
Then glad of heart, she placed her hand in his,
And gave the services of love
To bless his gifts of Life.
And lo! sweet melody of Love and Life
Swept all the chords of being in the world.”

“It is not mine to tell the joyous spell
The bright ones fashioned for our weary hearts,
Nor mine to paint the splendor of that day
Their shining fingers spun the threads of light;
But all the joys that Life and Love can give

A SONG OF FAITH

Was poured with lavish hand upon our sphere
What time they spent in unalloyed delight
Enraptured of each others godlike love.”

“But woe befell when somber Allat came
From those dim regions of the sacred dead,
And claimed the Beautiful !
With ruthless hand, she smote his happy heart —
Congealed the currents of his pulsing life
And drew the gloom of Hades o’er his mind,—
Snatched the bright spirit from its lovely form
And bore it to her realm of night and dread
Where dust and silence reign.”

“Isthara bewailed her dead nor comfort found
In deeds of mercy, or the old delights
Of weaving love-spells for the restless world.
So much her joy had blended with the will,
And noble purpose of the Beautiful —
It seemed, his spirit gone, the fruit of Life
Withered and failed within her nerveless hand.
Grief bruised her heart to silence, yet her eyes
Pierced the gray gloom of Allat’s land of Death ;
Then well she knew the limpid flow
Of life’s great river had its secret source
Beneath the palace of the awful queen.”

A SONG OF FAITH

“Oh could I win,” she cried, “for Tammuz
need,

The cool refreshing waters of yon pool,—
Pour o'er his heart and brow the azure wave —
And press the crystal to his palid lips,—
Joy would revive the silent heart again,
The mind would wake again to living thought,
The sleeping spirit move to deeds of light.”

“Then Isthar rose, her mind serene and calm,
Her spirit strong with purpose and resolve,
To win the spirit of her well-beloved
From Allat’s dreadful thrall.

Hasting she sped unto the realms of death —
Assailed the ramparts with exultant will —
Struck the high portals with commanding force
And in imperious tones demanded; “Now
Open to me the doors of Allat’s house!
Open to me the fountain ’neath the dome
And give again my well beloved life —
Else I shall wake the many myriad dead
And leave Allat bereft.”

“Such force of love and will had Isthar then,
Grim Allat trembled at her presence there
And waived her law that none dare violate,—

A SONG OF FAITH

Her law supreme : ‘No living soul
Shall pass my threshhold o’er, save those
Whom Death shall lure from out the world,
And from my bourn no traveler shall return.’ ”

“ Yet Isthар must obey the common law,
Put off her brow the sign of pulsing life
And lay the sceptre of her office down.
Intent upon her quest, she quick obeyed,
Took off her jewels and her robe of white,
And e’en the garments of her spirit lay
At Allat’s feet.
And so she stood before the awful queen,
A living soul robed in the primal dress
Great Hea gave when first he bade her live.”

“ When Allat saw the beauty of her soul,
And knew the secret of her mystic power,
Her jealous rage sought vent in deeds of wrath.
She e’en devised new forms of pestilence,—
New pangs of suffering and new vials of hate,—
Awoke the imps of torment from their sleep
And placed the power of torture in their hands ;
Adjured them take the Radiant One away,
And pour the evil of all wickedness
Upon her brow, her breast.”

A SONG OF FAITH

“Full sixty times ye shall repeat the deed,
Until this vaunting spirit comes to sue
For favors at my hand.
Too well I know her power in realms of Life,
But here in Death we will not own her spell.”

“Then darkness fell o'er all the beauteous world,
And anguish smote the hearts so lately glad,
Till every being bowed in brooding grief
For Istharp in her hour of deepest need.
From truest hearts her love had softly blest,
A tender sympathy and chant arose,
Pervading all the gloom of mortal night;
So pierced the shades of the immortal dead
And pressed the brow of Istharp in the strife,—
As dew drops on the sun exhausted flower,
Revived her strength and lifted high
The baffled purpose of her stern resolve.”

“Then Istharp rose, a light upon her brow,
That smote with blindness all those forms of night.
Before that gaze, grim Allat fell away,
Striving to shield her splendor dazzled eyes

A SONG OF FAITH

From light so brilliant, and the mighty power
Of Love triumphant in its quest for Life.”

“Straight to the fountain speed the dauntless
One,—

With stainless hands the mystic waters dipped,
And lo! the miracle of ages grew!

Within those palms the sparkling liquid rose
A living spring that laughed with pure delight,
And ran the brim of yon fair chalice o'er
To bless the world with rivers sweet and clear.”

“But Tammuz lay within the palace hall
Inert and still, a ghastly form of dread,
Whose image made brave Isthbar's heart to fail.
But those bright waters babbled sweet and low,
The song of life and all its lovely joys;
So taking heart, she hastened to fulfill her rite,
And poured the healing waters over Tammuz'
form.”

“Then she beheld the spark of life return,—
His heart regained its strength of vital force,—
His eyes grew bright with glad exultant
thought,—
Twas then she brought the purple, royal robe

A SONG OF FAITH

Great Hea gave to mark him Lord of Life,
And clasping it about his stately form,
Lifted and bore him to the portals dark
Of Allat's drear abode.

There, touched by balm of heavens refreshing air,
Tammuz arose, resumed his sceptred power,
And pausing, kissed fair Isthār's noble brow
And breathed a benediction on her love.''

"Isthār rejoicing, saw her soul's fair garb
Trampled and soiled upon the pavement there;
But scarce her finger tips had touched the hem,
When all the folds grew lustrous with the light
Of her great sacrifice, and e'en the jewels
Of her high degree blazed forth
The peerless splendor of her matchless soul."

"So came those bright ones from the land of
dread,
From Allat's kingdom, drear and desolate;—
So Life and Love came back to realms of light
To bless the world with beings sweet content,
For Isthār's love had triumphed over Death.

PART IV

Conquests of Faith.

Who in hope believed against hope, to the end that he might become a father of many nations, according to that which had been spoken, so shall thy seed be.

ROMANS.

A SONG OF FAITH

The maiden's voice fell mute, the tale was done,
The beauteous lore the Chaldee virgins loved,
Was here enriched by one whose generous mind
Saw purest virtue in all thoughts and deeds.
Good Eliezer wrapped in list'ning mood
Discerned the potent beauty of the theme,
But read, more pleased, the maiden modesty,
The worth of womanhood, the wealth of heart,
Expressed in chastity of thought and noble speech.

The night had folded down her purple shades
Across the golden splendor of the west,
And Isthlar's silver lamp of living light
Had faded from the sight.
But rising high, the moon her splendor shed
In soft effulgence round the grove of palm.
The pulse of life was calm. Its soothing peace
To Eliezer's heart was full of power,—
The power divine that moves the souls of men
From truth to truth.
Flowing serene from yon Eternal One,
He saw it bind men's customs, thoughts and wills
In one harmonious chorus, pure and clear

A SONG OF FAITH

The whole creation now exultant sings
Wheeling in majesty around Jehovah's throne.

Then slowly spake the steward, and rejoiced
Rebekah's mind with strains of sweeter song;
He struck the harp of life and every chord
Was vibrant with a new, a fairer charm;
He breathed a halo 'round familiar things,
Till pain and sorrow, hope and blessed peace,
And all the secret cloisters of the soul
Were touched with glory, radiant and sublime.

“Sweet is thy song, dear maid,
No greater love hath mortal mind conceived
Than one should follow to the gates of death
With sweet affections' ministering balm,
And by the chords of living sacrifice,
Draw hence the loved one from the silent sleep.”

Measured and slow the quiet accents fell;
So musing, Eleazer scanned the past
With eager, yet with reminiscent mood,
Asking his soul the lesson most benign
That years of toil and careful thought had won
From out the deep mysterious facts of human
life.

A SONG OF FAITH

“Thy song is good, for truly love abides,
To bless the social spirit of mankind ;
It binds in genial joys our frail designs
Of home, of city and the ponderous schemes
That makes a nation’s power.

Yet love is not Supreme, nor conquest makes
Upon the hearts of men. Too much they seek
The prize of mortal life, its little joys ;
Too much they grasp the pomp of temporal
power,

The gaudy trappings that adorn the flesh,
And all the baubles that a selfish mind
Can carve from stores of generous mother earth,
To feed its vain ambition and delight.

These things are for a day, they pass and fade :
Nation on nation rises to enjoy
The fretted carvings of their haughty prime,
Then pass away to leave in tomes of time
The little lessons of their vain desires.

But love that gives its service for the race,—
That spends its strength in willing servitude
To bless the suffering and disconsolate—
A love that pours its soul-life on mankind,—
A soul-life, white with pure, celestial fire,
And bearing in its heart the potent force
To print on minds a new design of life,—

A SONG OF FAITH

Ah, this is yet to be.

Somewhere, sometime,
Beyond the vision of our mortal eyes
Such love shall give its blessing to mankind,—
Shall break the bonds of human selfishness
And so redeem the race from sin and death.

“Jehovah lives. His clear but voiceless Word
Moves on in mighty grandeur through the maze
The ages slow unroll.

The stars maintain their course,
The world abides; but in the heart of man are
truths innate

That future eons can alone unfold.
E'en now, in our triumphant day,
He works a new, a living miracle;
And we who lift our eyes to read His truth
Rejoice to see His presence in His works.

“Yea, I have seen Him touch a human soul
And lo! it grew in trust and purpose
Strong with power divine.

That soul, aware of Great Jehovah's will,
Moves steadfast to the deeds His word com-
mands,

And by obedience proves His power to bless

A SONG OF FAITH

With strength, with peace, with perfect light
of truth.

My mind grows clear with vision of his life,—
His will in yielding to the law revealed,
Grows flexible and strong. His heart
To peace inclined, now treasures more
The voice divine that calls
To duty. So he lives
Incarnate faith.

Even his name the holy signet bears
And Abraham is called the Friend of God.

“It has been good to live and know the man;
To see his soul grow stronger day by day,
To see his mind transcend the petty plans
Of scheming monarchs and their lust of power,—
To see him rise above the lures of sense,—
To know he sees with faith anointed eyes
The future glory of the human race.

“Yes, love shall bloom like some immortal
rose
And bless our senses with its sweet perfume,
But faith must hew the mighty base of stone
On which to raise the templed soul of man,
And build the structure of eternal life.

A SONG OF FAITH

“Oh maiden fair, I cannot trace for thee
The outline of those splendid monoliths,—
For who can know the inner heart of man,—
The heaven born soul that thrills the plastic
clay?

Like fleeting shadows of the sun-kissed clouds,
That skim the skies in summer’s golden prime
And shine again in clear Euphrates’ wave,—
So spirit swept is e’en the life of man.

“And Abraham! ah, well it is to lean
Upon such friendship in this life of stress!
Three times I’ve marked his soul in noble deed
Proclaim the conquest of his earnest will,
And yield the passing joys of mortal sense
To mould a man for all eternity.

“Once here at Ur he heard the Voice divine
That called from scenes of happy youth’s de-
light,
From friendship’s ties the fleeting years had
bound
With cords of kindly intercourse and peace.
Yea, clearly came Jehovah’s blest command;
‘Leave thou thy father’s house and journey
hence

A SONG OF FAITH

Unto a land I shall reveal to thee,'
But Abraham would fain have tarried here,
For men grow strong in pleasant social joys,
Like stately trees that weave the light and air
Into the fiber of their rugged stems,
And so resist the storms that beat and bend,—
So Abraham had woven Chaldea's lore
Into the heart-strings of his daily thought
And found it irksome to obey the call;
Here, too, a parent's failing years besought him
stay,
For Terah's flesh cried out with longing deep
For quiet grave on fair Chaldea's plains.

"But still the call was clear, Jehovah warned
Against the lure of Ur's deceitful ease,
Revealed the flattering solace of the gods,—
And fruitless favor of the priestly craft,—
The vain ambition for material wealth
And Elam's thirst for power:
Not here among the sons of crafty men
Could he achieve the conquest of the age
And win his deathless heritage of faith.

"Then he arose enlightened with the truth,
And laid aside, like garments worn to shreds

A SONG OF FAITH

His friendships and his high prosperity.
One sacred trust he lingered to fulfill,—
His father's wish to sleep 'mid well-loved scenes
Beside Euphrates' wave, awhile restrained,
But when at last he paid the filial debt
His fond affection prompted to be due,
He left familiar scenes and journeyed hence
To fashion, yonder in fair Hebron's vale,
The inner life of faith."

"Again I marked the conquest of his soul,—
More potent far its deep significance
Since vital heart-strings strained beneath the
test
Jehovah wrought.

"The fleeting years had sped,
And in their wake had left
A trust serene, a deathless confidence,
For pledge on pledge the Lord had oft fulfilled.
Among the treasures of His bounteous gifts,
Pledges and promises of vanished years,
None were so precious as the gentle son
Whose coming blessed and hallowed every dream
Of love for Sarah and the glimmering hope
Of nations yet unformed. So Isaac grew
A boy of tender years, the comely lad

A SONG OF FAITH

Filled fond affection's sweet solicitude,—
So blessed his parents' gray declining days,
That life grew fair with love's mild servitude—
Its gentle ministrations rendered there.

“One day my master bade my hands prepare
The asses for a journey and the wood
Used in the sacrifice, also the bread
Needful for pilgrimage. Then bade me come
With him and Isaac on the rugged way,—
A three days' journey to Moriah's mount,
Where worshipers are wont to sacrifice
Their best beloved to God's eternal care.

“When far away we saw the barren hill
Rising in grandeur in the blue-domed sky,
He bade me stay. Then in his hand
He took the wavering flame, the knife,
Sacred alone to paschal sacrifice,
But laid the wood on Isaac's tender form.

“I marveled much for bleating lamb was none
To offer on the altar's incense stone,
Yet questioned not, but Isaac voiced my thought,
Saying: ‘My father, here are fire and cleaved
wood,
But where the lamb our hands shall sacrifice?

A SONG OF FAITH

I saw a light upon the patriarch's brow,
Whether of joy or grief, I could not tell,
So transient was the beam. But in
His voice was confidence and peace,
As he replied :

‘The Lord, my child,
Provides the paschal lamb.’

“Then what befell I had no means to know,
But Isaac told with many a word of awe,
The wondrous peace that ruled his father's
heart

While climbing up the mountain's rugged slopes
And even while he strove to yield
The gift of sacrifice.

“They raised an altar of the virgin stones
And Abraham spread out the cleaved wood
And laid the fire amid the fagots there;
Then bound his son, his sacred treasure kept
As testament of sacred covenant,
And laid him on the stone of offering.
His hand was raised to slay the paschal lamb
So truly God's provision, when from the sky
A voice benignant fell and stayed the stroke:

A SONG OF FAITH

“ ‘Nay, Abraham,’ the tone was low and clear
‘This day thy soul has proven its love to me
In willingness to serve. Forbear the deed,
A living sacrifice of perfect service and its per-
fect faith,
Is more to me than death of this thy son.
Behold the lamb! Close at thy side it bleats.”

“And lo! the lamb was there,
Caught in the thorn beside the altar stones.
So Isaac joined his father in the prayer
And offered up the lamb the Lord prepared.

“Again I saw the stature of the soul
More beautiful with inmost trust in God.
’Twas on the night he called me to the tent
To send me on this happy quest for thee.
He told me all the purpose of his heart,
And God’s approval of the gracious hope
That sought upon the joy of Isaac’s love
To rest the future of a hardy race.
He told me one great purpose of his plan,
And how Jehovah’s will had blest his hope
With covenant of truth. How well he saw
The future years unroll the glory of a people,
And the light of worship of the God Most High.
He told me how on Isaac’s life
And thy most faithful comradeship

A SONG OF FAITH

Must rest fulfillment of the covenant.
He seemed to know the purpose of thy mind,
By inner sight beheld thy womanhood,
Its power to love and choose the eternal good,
Its hope of life, its subtle strength to mould
The purposes of thought and hope and deed
Into the immortal grandeur of a soul.”

“I cannot tell what visions sweep his mind
How far the future shines before his eyes,
But this I know, true faith hath wrought in him
A living miracle in human life,—
Not in the mortal form that wastes to dust,
But in the soul that animates the form;
So has he woven God’s eternal truth
Into his spirit’s deathless heritage
That in all time, wherever men shall rise
To sing Jehovah’s praises and adore
His great creative Word,—there Abraham
Will live and speak again
The conquering power of faith.”

The listening group beneath the spreading palms,
Were thrilled with power of moving eloquence
Whose vital force was fraught with living truth
And deeds heroic of a human soul.

A SONG OF FAITH

The story done, the tense and earnest thought
Found utterance in soft expressive words
Of wonder and delight.
But fair Rebekah mused in silence deep,
And sought in inmost recess of her mind
For acquiescence to the truth revealed
In faith, in deed, in word.

At last she rose, with hasty finger tips
Swept light the ivory whiteness of her brow
As if to lift the film of mortal sense,
And see with inner sight the vision clear,
Then spake in accents calm :

“Ah, Eliezer, what is this thou sayest
Of life,—its purpose in the will of God?
Thou canst not see the future years unfold
The hidden glory of the perfect day
Now dawning on our eyes? Ah well
It is to see the glimmering light,
Pale glowing on the mountain’s purple rim
And know the day will come.
So out of human effort grows the power
Of noble purpose. But the vision bright
Of man’s perfection leads to purer life.
Ah, were it well to see and to believe
Unless the will to do, achieve the dream
In character and deed?

A SONG OF FAITH

“No sweeter music ever charmed my ear,
Than this thy lore of Father Abraham;
His faith, his deeds, his covenant with God.
If on his eyes the future years unroll
The glory of the nations grown strong
By careful nurture of Jehovah’s Word,—
If he would fill the world with living truth
Of God’s eternal care,—His Fatherhood,—
What more can we than yield our service due,
To speed the truth our humble hearts enfold?

“My thanks, Oh Eliezer, for thy speech,
Its blessed import lifts my mind to light
Of perfect understanding, and my heart
Is singing its beatitude to praise
Our Great Jehovah’s Word.

Now in His peace to rest,
Good-night, good-night.”

PART V

CONSUMMATION

And Isaac went out to meditate in the fields at eventide ; and he lifted up his eyes, and saw, and behold, there were camels coming.

GENESIS.

A SONG OF FAITH

A prayer, a benediction when the chant is
done,
So breathed the voices of the gathering eve,
What time the flowerets closed their smiling
eyes,
And folded drooping petals, singing low,
The psalm of glad thanksgiving and delight
For soft caress of mild, declining sun,
And dewy kisses of the misty breeze.

Then Isaac knew the message of the hour,
Then heard the silent call of Nature's voice
With heart responsive; left the sheltering tent
To tread sequestered paths and seek anew
The mystic source of all her soothing charm.
By quiet thought he tuned his harp of life,
To ring harmonious to the peaceful scene;
He saw the glory of the evening sky,
The trailing beauty, soft in many a curve
Of valley, plain or distant mountain slope;
He marked the blended branch of olive, oak and
vine,—
The misty glow of flower-embroidered dells,
Where drowsy birds their plaintive vespers
trilled,
And all his heart rejoiced.

A SONG OF FAITH

What purer joy hath human soul than this ;
To stand serene while peaceful day declines,
The senses charmed with myriad beauteous
forms,

The quiet heart unmoved, awaits intent
To hear the trailing garments of the life
That calmly moves through all the pulsing
sphere.

How good to feel the conscious being thrill
In unison with that impelling Soul
That moves triumphant through the universe
And thus reveals Itself in form, in light, in
sound.

Oh ye who bar the lightly swinging door,—
Who close your will against the gentle voice
Of inmost soul that pleads in humble prayer
To share the glory of infinitude—
How know the priceless treasure ye have
spurned,—
The vision bright your darkened eyes assailed ?

No need had Isaac's mind to search the maze
Of earthly beauty or the realm of thought
For yon deep mystery of boundless life.
Ah no ! his inmost soul had dwelt in secret peace
With the Eternal Truth, Jehovah's love ;

A SONG OF FAITH

And now he felt the tide of Spirit surge on
surge,
Move through the beauteous world,—
He felt its mighty billows sway his heart,—
Its mystic waves beat on the shore of thought,
Till all his senses thrilled with reverent awe,
And prayer, that spirit breath of truth revealed
Flowed unrestrained from pure and stainless
lips.

Oh soul made strong with mystic bread of
life !
Oh heart serene with balm of heavenly peace !
To thee the evening meditation brings surcease
Of cares that press with weary pain or strife.

The worship done, a peace more potent far
Than soothed to rest the summer's golden day,
On Isaac's heart its benediction prest ;
And while the mists their silvery curtains drew
Across the distant blues of Jordan's hills,
The strain of music smote his listening ear,—
The chime of tinkling bells, the mingled strain
Of happy laughter and the careless song,
Of voices low in serious converse blent.
Then lo ! from out the amethystine shades,

A SONG OF FAITH

A stately caravan its course pursued,
Moving across the dew-enfolded fields
Toward his bower of quiet solitude.

Nearer it drew and on his ear there fell,
The brighter music of barbaric bards,
Who brightly led the camels on the way
With clash of cymbal and the chime of bells,
To mark the cadence of the orient song;
And then the beat of many weary feet,—
Of camels knowing well the journey o'er,
Hasten to win the longed-for cool retreat.

The heart's sweet impulse to assure the guest
A cordial welcome and the cup of cheer,
Moved Isaac's feet to meet the coming train.
His questioning glance beheld the trappings gay
Of festive garb in myriad tint and hue,—
Beheld the camel drivers, careless of their
charge
And maidens smiling on the quiet scene.

Then quick his gaze was held serene, intent,
By quiet eyes and fair and placid brow,—
A face where serious thought was subtle charm
To hold attention and command respect.
And seeing, Isaac knew full well

A SONG OF FAITH

The quiet joy of happy dream fulfilled
In something more than glad reality,
For living peace of Great Jehovah's Word
Diffused within his mind its potent spell
Of blessing and assurance of the grace
Of love's beatitude.

So deep his mood,
He scarcely knew the camel men
Had stayed the caravan with stern command
And waited his behest. Then slow the maiden
Drew the embroidered wimple o'er her face,
And he who rode companion at her side,
Dismounting, came apace to Isaac's feet,—
Gave salutation in the manner grave
Of orient servant to his honored lord.

Then Isaac knew the dear familiar form
Of Eliezer and the portent true
Of caravan, of fair and serious maid.
His quiet grace of gentle courtesy,
A benediction and a welcome gave
To faithful friend and steward of his trust,
And turning tranquil gaze upon the maid,
Murmured: "And peace to thee,
Fair daughter of Chaldea's clime.
Come thou and thine to Mamre's silver pool,

A SONG OF FAITH

Where cool, refreshing water waits thy need
To soothe the desert heat, and there
My father, Abraham, will welcome thee
With fitting gift and speech."

At soft command the camels took their way
Across the golden meadow's dewy road,
And Isaac walking by the steward's side
Asked for the story of his favored quest,
And Eliezer bowing made reply :

"Thy father's God is good. Jehovah's word
Be always covenant to thee and thine.
By Ur's high wall He heard my earnest prayer,
And gave me this, the child of Nahor's house,
The fair Rebekah, for my trustful plea.
And when within her father Bethuel's house,
I told my mission to the gates of Ur,
She heard rejoicing and in gentle mood
Pledged fond obedience to the heavenly call,
And so she comes to bless thy life, thy love."

Isaac replying, said :
"My thanks I give thee, Eliezer, friend,
For faithful service well and wisely done.
Thy word is good. Jehovah's will
Is ours to cherish and obey."

A SONG OF FAITH

Then to Rebekah :

“Beloved of Bethuel, Jehovah’s peace be thine !
My dreaming love grows strong
With sight of thy dear face, and glad my heart
Sings royal welcome to my mother’s tent,
Where long I learned her lore of woman’s love.
And thou art come by heavenly guardians
kept,—

By this I read Jehovah’s law of peace ;
His purpose rules our lives,
And though the waste of desert sands
Lay wide between the scenes of youthful years,
We twain are one in hope, in faith, in love,
And we will weave the fabric of our days
In fadeless colors of a perfect trust.

“I came this eve to muse in silent prayer,
Jehovah’s purpose and His will for me ;
E’en while I questioned came His blessed peace,
And while it lingered on my inmost soul,
The caravan thy gentle presence gave,
And I beheld thy face, calm, beautiful,
Where purity of thought and truth
Have left their imprint in serene repose
And quiet dignity.

A SONG OF FAITH

Then in my heart

I knew thou wast the maid
My soul should love for peerless womanhood
Through all the ages of eternity.
Jehovah's voice hath spoken. Let it be."

Rebekah drew the 'broidered veil aside,
And meeting Isaac's gaze with quiet eyes,
Made slow reply :
"I know not when nor how my musing mind
Conceived the contour of thy form and face,
But now I see thee on this brink of time,
I know the semblance of a constant dream
Hath grown to full and sweet reality.
I know that somewhere far beyond our ken
Thy soul was fashioned for my full delight,—
My purpose, wish and will attuned to thine.
If haply, too, thy heart may crave the boon
Of fond affection and the word of peace,
I pray it mine to give thee meed of love,—
To cheer, to bless, to comfort and sustain.
Jehovah guard and keep thy mother's tent
A sacred shrine where love and truth divine
Shall mould the growing image of the soul
In likeness to Jehovah's word."

A SONG OF FAITH

Slowly the caravan with lingering pace
Moved toward the tent by Mamre's limpid
pool,—
Softly the music of its rhythmic tread,
Blended with speech so full of deep import
That voiced the purpose of each trusting heart.
So Isaac and Rebekah came with pledge of love,
Beneath the spreading oak whose sheltering
boughs
Bent down with light caress to bless with shade
The tent of Abraham.

Silence within the tent. The shades of even
Deepened and wove a charm of quietude.
The faithful Abraham reclined at ease
Upon a sumptuous couch.
Musing he watched the fading rose tints
Pale to gray along the western sky,
Heard the soft hush of evening fall serene
About the pool. The soft breeze
Swayed the leaves of Hebron's oak.
A drowsy twitter of belated birds,
Lulled the bright day to rest.

Murmur of voices,
Tread of many feet, and soft
The tinkle of the camel bells,

A SONG OF FAITH

Broke on his musing mood. And lo! by subtle
sense
Of intuition, knew, good Eliezer from his quest
returned,
Was here at Mamre's pool.

With haste to welcome home the steward,
friend,—
To greet the maiden of the favored quest,—
The patriarch went forth in joyous mood,
And by the pool his eager welcome gave.

“My well-beloved, Jehovah’s peace be yours,
His name be praised for work so nobly done,—
His word your guide and purpose all the days;
The fragrance of your trust be incense sweet,
To win His favor in each hour of need.
Oh come, my children, come within the tent,
Here let me hear the story of thy quest,
Oh Eliezer, and thy will, dear maid,
To share our trust divine.”

He drew the tent folds back and led within
The late come friends, and comfort made
With many a rude device,
While Isaac brought the food and cup of cheer
To speed the passing hour.

A SONG OF FAITH

Then Abraham, with patriarchal grace,
Spread out his hands in attitude of prayer,
Besought Jehovah's blessing and His peace.

The company served,
The simple supper done, Abraham spake
This kind paternal word :

“Right glad of heart, am I this night,
To see my heart's delight
Beneath this sheltering tent.
Good Eliezer, welcome home again,
And blessings on thy service nobly done.
And you, my children, how my heart doth sing
Its sweet beatitude for presence here
So favored and so dear.
Your lives united and your purpose one,
May these gray tent-folds prove a worthy place
To foster love and peace,—
Their shelter be your altar and your shield.
Here be your altar for the daily prayer,
Where every noble purpose has its source,
Where every poor desire its foil and snare;
A shelter from the beating storms and stress,
That marks the converse of our human kind,
And wearies heart and mind.
Here Sarah wrought the magic of her art,—

A SONG OF FAITH

The gentle grace of trusting womanhood,
And wove the wondrous web of human love
'Round Isaac's life and mine.

Here have we pondered many an earnest truth,
Seen many a vision of the future years,
And wrought the purpose of Jehovah's will
With many a word of praise.

"Oh children, keep Jehovah's guiding word
A sacred treasure. Let no idle mood
Destroy the purpose of His high decree,
Delay His sacred plan.

How can I tell you what His clear voice speaks
In hours of meditation to my soul ?
But this believe, no idle dreaming mine ;
Nay, this eternal vision must endure
Throughout the endless years that come and go
While men shall walk the earth ;
And it must gleam beside all fields, all streams
Of earnest thought and noble duty done.
And everywhere shall grow enduring forms
Of human character and righteous states
To bless the life of man."

"How can I sing of His eternal love,
How speak the purpose of His wise decrees,
How vast His power divine ?

A SONG OF FAITH

How tell you what His sacred truth enfolds,
What devious ways He leads the life of man ?
But somewhere in the future's golden prime,
He shall reveal His purpose all complete
In one serene and perfect Son of Man
And Son of God.
Whom to believe shall be eternal Life.
In that far time the world shall e'en rejoice
Because you lived and ever sacred kept
The perfect Law of Faith.''

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